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Soviet dissident newsletter resurfaces after 18-month gap

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Moscow—The underground newsletter of Soviet dissidents, *The Chronicle of Current Events*, reappeared yesterday after an absence of more than 18 months.

Three issues of the *Chronicle*, reporting the activities of critics and opponents of the Soviet regime, were circulated to Western newsmen here this past weekend in a calculated taunt to Soviet authorities, who have been trying to eliminate the journal.

Failed to appear

Not only Western observers but most dissidents here had believed that the police had succeeded when the *Chronicle* failed to appear after its 27th issue was circulated in October, 1972.

But Nos. 28, 29 and 30 were circulated by dissidents this weekend in an effort to prove that not only the *Chronicle* but also the whole dissident movement is alive and well—if

operating underground—despite a concerted police effort to suppress it.

Dissident sources acknowledged, however, that the *Chronicle* is circulating in only a few dozen copies now, about a 20th of its former circulation when every reader retyped it with four or five carbons for friends, who then passed it on in the same manner.

Even in that way, however, it is unlikely that the *Chronicle* reached more than a few thousand readers, although there was no accurate assessment of its readership.

The *Chronicle*, which gave the dissident movement a unity it did not otherwise enjoy, was the principal target of "Case 24" of the KGB, as the Soviet secret police is known by its Russian initials.

A high point of activity in this case came last August when two key figures in the *Chronicle's* production and distribution were put on trial here. Both men, Pyotr I. Yakir

and Viktor Krasin, recanted and confessed to anti-Soviet activities, and both received light sentences enabling them to live in "exile" about 150 miles from Moscow.

Chronicle No. 28 reports events in the last quarter of 1972. No. 29 covers the first six months of 1973, and No. 30 the last half.

A forward to No. 28 said that distribution of the *Chronicle*, which had been published almost regularly every other month, had been halted because of the "repeated and unambiguous threats by the KGB to answer each new issue of the *Chronicle* with new arrests, the arrests of people suspected by the KGB of publication or distribution of new or past issues."

"The nature of the morale situation, in which people found themselves presented with the difficult necessity of taking decisions not just for themselves, does not need explanation," the *Chronicle* said.

"But continued silence would have indicated support—although indirect and passive—for the 'hostages' tactics, which are incompatible with the rights, ethics and dignity of man."

The new issues of the *Chronicle* are in the same style and format as the previous issues except for a small change in the subtitle, which now declares: "Activities in defense of the rights of man in the Soviet Union are continuing."

Resurfaced recently

Few of the events reported in the three issues are new, but the *Chronicles* provided additional details on several.

The *Chronicles* also carry a statement by three members of the Initiative Group for the Defense of Human Rights, which also was believed to have been disbanded under police pressure until it resurfaced recently, saying that they felt it their duty to aid "the widest possible dissemination" of the *Chronicle*.

The three, Sergei Kovalev, a biologist, Tatyana Khodorovitch, a linguist, and Tatyana Velikanova, a mathematician, said they were convinced that "the truthful information about infringements of the basic rights of man in the Soviet Union should be available to all who are interested."

All three were among the more than 200 persons questioned in connection with the Yakir-Krasin case before it came to trial last summer, according to the *Chronicle*.

Release of the *Chronicles* was meant, dissident sources here acknowledged, to give a boost to the movement, which is torn apart by internal dissension over its goals and tactics, and to raise its flag before the outside world.

The three *Chronicles* had had only limited circulation within dissident circles before their release this weekend in order to protect those producing and distributing them and to prevent police reprisals.

"But it got to the point when we had to let people know, both in the Soviet Union and abroad, that we are alive and well—that we have kept the faith—no matter what the cost might be in police action," said one dissident who had remained active in the *Chronicles'* production.

Little attention to debate

The last three issues of the *Chronicle* give little attention, however, to the continuing debate among dissidents over whether political reform is possible from within the Soviet system or whether it must be forced upon Moscow by outside powers—by the United States, for example, in return for trade concessions.

"The *Chronicle* has always sought to unify the movement, not divide it," another dissident said. "We see a single target and we have no desire to divert our aim from the issue of human rights, civil rights and their exercise in the Soviet Union."